

**Unfinished  
Rainbows  
And Other Essays**

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# I

## UNFINISHED RAINBOWS

THE rainbow was only a fragment of an arch because the needed sunshine was withheld. Had the sunlight been permitted to permeate all the atmosphere with its golden glow, the arch would have spanned the entire heavens.

This is the reason why, in hours of sorrow, we do not grasp the fullness of God's promise; we permit the denser clouds of doubt and faithlessness to keep the light of God from shining through our griefs; or, with a little faith, we get a gleam of light that gives us but a tiny fragment of the bow.

While all the operations of this natural world are tokens of God's unfailing thoughtfulness in keeping his covenant with man, a great event has made the rainbow peculiarly the embodiment of that thought. Looking from the narrow window of the wave-tossed ark, upon the silent grandeur of a world slowly arising from the waters of an universal flood, Noah beheld the rainbow and rejoiced in the blest assurance, that, while the things of man are subject to the ravages of time and destruction of contending elements, the things of God are always stable and secure. The most permanent products of man's hand and mind are soon swept away, but the things of God endure, and continue faithful, in working out their appointed courses. Through storm or calm, events march with steady, unceasing tread, knowing that God's roads are never worn, and God's bridges never tremble and fall. Above the

placid, mysterious world, calmly emerging from the muddy, wreck-strewn waters, was the peaceful, radiant bow, smiling in confidence upon him and his companions. The world had changed, but the rainbow was just as it had always been, stately, serene, and unaffrighted. The crumbling, flood-torn earth had not weakened its foundations, the drenching rains had not faded its colors, the hurrying, wind-swept clouds could not disturb it. Though it were made out of hurrying light and drifting mist it would not be swayed or moved even a little. Under its archway walked the guarding angels of God. Over the waters came the clear voice once heard in Eden, uttering the promise, "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant."

That is a sweeping promise that is literally fulfilled in nature. All clouds carry rainbows. Most of them are never seen by us because we lack the necessary keenness of vision, or the proper point of view to behold their woven colors; many are only partially seen because something intervenes and prevents a perfect intersection of heavenly sunlight with our earth-born mists; many are within the vision of all observing men; but, whether we see it or not, for every cloud there is a scarf of red and orange and yellow and green and blue and scarlet and purple. So, in spiritual matters, we find that for every sorrow there are beautiful assurances of God's presence and unwavering covenant-keeping power. If we do not see them it is not God's fault, for the light of his faithfulness transfixes every cloud that arises above his earth-born children.

There are the clouds of bereavement. The Death Angel defied your love-locked doors and bolted windows. Heeding neither your cry nor your pleadings, he entered your home and pushed aside the doctor and attending nurses and friends, and touching the heart of your loved one, stilled it to sleep. Your grief was such that you did not see how you could live. The home seemed empty and strangely silent. The entire pathway seemed shrouded in the somber shadows of your grief. Life was a desolation. But you did not give up in despair. There was a bow in the cloud. An arch of seven brilliant hues reached from one horizon to another horizon, and you knew that the One in whom you had placed your trust had proven true. He had not forgotten you. Looking at the rainbow, the token of his covenant, you read in its mingled colors the words of the Lord Jesus, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." In your sorrow you found that the bow of God's promises never trembles.

You were facing financial disaster. All your investments had proven bad. You had been misled by false counsel. The savings of years had been swept away by one fell swoop of disaster, and with them had gone all the fond plans for the future of your family and loved ones. Your head reeled as you felt the earth giving way beneath you; you were about to close your eyes in despair, when suddenly, in the darkest part of the overshadowing cloud, you saw the rainbow. God had not forgotten you. Amid the whirl and destruction of things his promises never trembled. Its gleaming colors told you that you were not alone, and spelled such a message of hope and inspiration to your soul, that you smiled in the face of adversity.

Here was the promise, “There is no want to them that fear Him.” You had never seen the beauty of those words before. You felt the thrill of a new life and the confidence that you once placed in riches, you now centered upon God.

There were the dark clouds of misplaced friendship. You were confident that the one in whom you were placing your trust was worthy, but through that friendship you were betrayed, and misrepresented, and made the object of scorn and criticism. No cloud is darker than that, no sorrow is harder to bear, and yet you did not lose confidence in man. Above the feathered edges of the cloud was the rainbow of God’s promise, and you knew that if even father and mother forsook you, the Lord would take you up. The rainbow, as the symbol of God’s promise, said: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

But some one says, “I have never been able to grasp the *fullness* of these promises. Amid life’s clouds I cannot see the presence of the Almighty.” That is not God’s fault, but because one hinders the coming of the light. If you do not permit the Spirit of God to shine upon your sorrow with its golden light, the ministration of the rainbow to your sorrow-smitten soul will never be complete. The comforts of God are known only by those who are willing to receive his holy ministrations. The rainbow is never finished for the one who refuses to receive Christ fully and completely into his life. He is the Light of the world, and his presence always brings the promises of the Father to their fullest possible earthly revelation and application. His revelations are always complete and as comforting as they are beautiful. His clear light of goodness has

always been making battle against the darkness of sin's mists and fogs. He is never satisfied until his love has intercepted every overshadowing cloud so that when you behold the streaming banners of the bow, that always follows and never precedes a storm, you may know that you, through him, have already gotten the victory. Light triumphs. The overshadowing cloud is pierced. Instead of somberness there is beauty.

The earthly rainbows will never be complete. Here we behold at best only a segment of a perfect circle. We have but a one-world view and therefore can behold but half the rainbow. In heaven we shall see the completed circle, as John beheld it in his vision and exclaimed, with rapturous delight, "There was a rainbow round about the throne." So glorious is the light of the great, white throne, and the face, and the raiment of Him that sat upon it, that to angelic vision it is nestled in the center of a perfectly rounded bow of brilliant hue.

The rainbow can never be destroyed, for the light of Christ can never fade. Ever about the throne of God, in perfect circle, shall gleam the steady, colored token of God's faithfulness through all time and all eternity. The multitude of white-robed ones that worship before the throne are those who have come out "of great tribulation," they are those who have "overcome through the blood of the Lamb," therefore it is fitting that the one choicest treasure saved from the natural world in which they fought their battles, and won their victories, should be the rainbow, the richly colored symbol of God's faithfulness and mercy. What emotions thrill our souls in this world when we look upon the rainbow! What memories shall sweep through

our souls when we behold the rainbow that is ever round  
about the great white throne of God!

## II GATHERING SUNSETS

THE sunset is the sheaf of the day's activities, wherein are bound all the roses and poppies and fruits and grains of the passing hours, for the experiences of life are constantly coming to full harvest. Weary with toil and worn with watching, we do not see the riches of to-day; or, stirred by some new ambition, our eyes become so fixed upon the future, that to-day's golden grain is trampled under foot and lost. Instead of facing the morrow's morn, rich with garnered treasures, we greet it with empty hands. We are not householders seeking strong-walled dwellings and broad, extending acres, but are careless, nomadic folk, wandering aimlessly from day to day, as gypsies wander from town to town. Having all things within our grasp, we possess nothing. When touched by the hand of Death, and taken out of life, the world is no more disturbed than by the bursting of a bubble on the ocean wave.

Sunsets are sheaves, and the brilliancy of their coloring is God's way of calling our attention to their value. The waving of so many golden and scarlet banners, by a myriad of unseen hands, should awaken the most careless soul to the consciousness that something mighty is transpiring. Such banners and pageantry passing through our streets would awaken the entire city to wonderment and concern. For what king are the banners waving? For what worthy cause are all these ensigns thrown upon the wind? What victory is celebrated here? Yet the

sunsets pass unheeded, and the golden sheaf of another day is trampled under careless feet, and left to mildew and decay.

The art of gathering sunsets, the grasping of each day's experiences with firm and constant hold, is one to covet. Days are not something to "pass through." Each day is like unto an acre of land, through which one may hurry, as in a train, without thought of right or ownership; or unto an acre of land which he holds in perpetual ownership, adding that much to his estate, and increasing his income through all the days that follow. Rather, it is a sheaf of grain, supplying food and affording strength for an ever-increasing work which he may throw away, or keep for future use. Sunset time is harvest time, and the evening hour is the one in which to fill full the granaries and treasure chests for days unborn. Sunsets should be bound with the golden cords of memory and kept forever.

The pathway of life grows brightest for those who have wasted fewest of their yesterdays. Hours well spent and safely garnered never lose the brightness of their sunshine. It always glows in the sparkle of the eye, in the brightness of a winning smile, in the warm atmosphere of helpfulness with which they are surrounded. Hours spent in sin and dissipation have no luster to cast upon the afterdays, but goodness is always luminous. Hours of right-living may be likened to blazing suns that never cease to glow. The ability to retain their brightness means an ever-increasing splendor of life. It is this that the inspired writer must have had in mind when he wrote that the pathway of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

The secret of perfection along any line of endeavor is the gathering in and retaining the good, at the same time sorting out and permanently eliminating that which is bad. It is a work of patience and progression. It requires the fruitage of many days, the garnered glories of many sunsets, to endow one with the riches of genius; and not one single day should be lost. The lapidist, whose magic touch changes pebbles into glittering jewels to adorn the neck of beauty; the sculptor, whose mallet-stroke is so accurate that rough, ill-shapen stones become forms of grace to inspire the generations; the artist, whose brush quickens the common dust and clay into marvelous paintings of unfading color and undying sentiment; the botanist, whose carefulness transforms barren waysides into gardens, and the desert places into banqueting halls; the metallurgist, whose powerful hand takes the knotted lumps of ore and fashions them into the bronze doors of a great cathedral—all these represent that priceless frugality that will not permit a sunset to escape. Their first crude efforts were sheaves of rich experiences, which they garnered and stored away in the treasure chests of memory. They had the bright light of their first sunsets to add to the morning light of their second endeavors. They continued to store the brightness of the passing experiences. Day by day the light grew brighter, until at last there came the perfect day, when the whole world stood amazed at the perfection of their handiwork. The loss of one sunset would have faded the light and dimmed the glory of their final achievement. All perfect art is but gathered sunsets.

This law holds in the matter of spiritual perfection. God does much for us at conversion, when, through faith in him, we are changed by his grace into new men and new women. It is like a

lost planet finding its central sun, and resuming\_ its accustomed place, and finding light, and warmth, and life, and joy again. Wonderful indeed is the power of God as manifested in the conversion of any individual, but conversion is not perfection. Perfection is something that the inspired writer urges us "to go unto." "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity."

Do not permit the colors of triumph to fade from your first day's sky. Hold on to that sunset. Each day will furnish its added beam of light. Faith, hope, and love, and all the Christian graces will become more beautiful for you, to you, and in you. The pathway will become brighter and brighter. Life will have fewer shadows because the light falls upon you from so many angles and becomes more perfectly diffused. To-morrow can have no hindering uncertainties, for the light of the past experiences illumines the future. There is light for every darkened corner, and one may rejoice that all things are working together for good, because we do love God. Gathered sunsets make life's trail ablaze with light.

Let no to-day become yesterday, except in the\_ calendar, as we reckon time. Each day must become part of us as we live in an ever-present now. The same alphabet we learned in childhood is ours to-day. Because we did not forget it with the setting of the sun, it served us to-day as we spell out, in polysyllables, a newly discovered truth. The alphabet did not fade with the death of the day we learned it, so that it is now part of our lives.

As we cannot think apart from the words we learned long ago; and as we cannot calculate, save as we use the first-learned characters from one to ten; so, in the developing of the soul, we must not lose one single hour of prayer or inspiration of a noble purpose.

Both building and growing are alike in this—they are processes of “adding to.” Brick added to brick and timber added to timber means a stately building. Cell added to cell means growth of body and increase in stature. But handling brick is not enough, they must be placed with a purpose and kept firmly fixed in the place desired. The brick of yesterday must be where it can have added to it the brick of to-day. Physical growth depends upon the keeping the cells of yesterday for a foundation upon which to build the cells of to-day. Christian living is similar. We build a character and grow a soul but the process is the same, with both character and soul. We gain by adding to. Therefore we must not permit any of our sunsets to fade away. All that we have gained through prayer and Christian service must be held to brighten each new morn. The spiritual victory over temptation, the answer to our intercessory prayers, the moment of spiritual illumination as we read the Bible, all these are priceless experiences upon which to add the newer conquests of to-day. We must not permit the disease of sin to sap our vitality and destroy the growth of yesterday. We must guard our spiritual health that we may grow. This is what Christ meant when he said: “Men ought always to pray.” The culture of the soul is an eternal process. Days must not pass; they must remain as part of our own selves.

### III

## BEYOND THE CURTAINED CLOUDS

ONE of the rarest treasures of the May time is the richness and purity of the sky. The winter wraps the heavens in robes of somber hue as though in mourning for the summer dead; but at the coming of the first white cloud, and sound of first lark's song, the sky seems to melt in tenderness, and assume the softest, richest hue of blue. As far as the eye can reach there is nothing but blue—soft, rich, warm, tender, melting, soul-entrancing blue. Blue, as clear as an unshadowed midland lake. Blue as a translucent sapphire without a flaw to disturb its gleaming surface. A great arch of caressing tenderness through which the white-flecked clouds ride in state, as they sail majestically from one port of mystery to another port of mystery. Among the richest treasures of the spring must be mentioned the deepening of the blue and the hanging of the snow-white curtains of the clouds.

But life's horizon is ever draped with rich folds of white and blue, that hang like silken curtains, to hide, with tantalizing secrecy, the mysteries that lie beyond. Day by day the curtains hide their treasure-chests of mystery, tempting us to strike tents and journey toward them. With the eagerness with which little children watch the unwrapping of a Christmas package we watch the moving of these clouds, trusting that each new shifting of the curtains will make the coveted revelation, but as we journey on they still evade us.

Conservative people, ones who never startle themselves or their friends by doing anything new, not that they are averse to doing anything new but simply because they are not mentally capable of entertaining new ideas, say that the mysteries that lie behind the curtained clouds are childish fancies and youth's illusions; and that energy expended in reaching the buried treasure at the rainbow's end were as fruitful an enterprise. Those of us who have endeavored to solve these mysteries know better, for we have found that the curtained clouds that hide, are the ones that, like banners, guide us to the things we really need.

Man must not be unmindful of the ministry of mystery. Over against everything enigmatic God has given man an insatiable desire to find out the hidden meaning. Yielding to that divinely implanted impulse develops powers that otherwise would atrophy. Behold the benefits of these endeavors as they lifted the human race out of stagnation and taught it the way of progress. Tented in the low swamplands, eating roots and bark, man saw these curtains that suggested to his hunger-pinched body the thought of a banqueting-hall where he might feed. His quest never brought him to the laden tables of his desire, but as he journeyed he found grain and fruits and nuts and berries, substantial food for a full twelvemonth. Dwelling amid the sick and dying, man saw the moving of the curtains that God hangs along our sky-line, and felt that, somewhere, beyond their folds, must exist a spring, whose living waters would not only heal the sick but give the drinker perpetual youth. The spring was never found, but as man journeyed westward in the quest he found a land whose liberties and institutions crowd a century of blessings into every decade. Toiling with small recompense,

like some dull beast of burden, man saw the clouds that suggested a palace of ease and luxury. He failed to find the palace of his dreams, but on the way he discovered labor-saving machinery that has made his labor a delight, and given to every laborer a home surpassing in comforts the baron's stately castle.

Because of the ministry of mystery he has been able to discover the depth and values of his own soul. In his effort to reach the curtained clouds man has had to rally his forces, and, to meet arising exigencies, he has been compelled to draw upon the resources of his nature, until he startled himself with his newly discovered possibilities and powers. He trained his body to wrestle against physical odds; he trained his mind to master the handicaps of ignorance; he found the glittering sword of courage with which to destroy defeating fear; he learned the value of faith and hope with which to enrich the soul when disaster would impoverish. Without the effort aroused by the cloudy curtains of mystery, he could not have found himself, and perfected his work of invention, art and letters.

The cloud curtains are also the temple curtains beyond which men are ever seeking God. As the pillared cloud led Israel victoriously through troubled waters and desert sands, so the mysteries of life and death, and the natural world in which we live, have led the human mind to religious contemplation. Man found himself entangled in the maze of sin, helplessly confused amid the ways that wound about, and crossed, and led to still more hopeless entanglements. Despair pointed to the narrow, tangled ways and said, "There is nothing better." Looking upward, the distant clouds spoke of a larger world and greater

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